

## BACKGROUND

### A. Location and General Characteristics of River, Watershed, and Region

The Jordan River is located in the northwestern part of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. The mainstream is 33 miles in length with headwaters in northwestern Antrim County, from whence it flows southwesterly to the center of the county, flowing north by northwesterly through the county and the southern part of Charlevoix County. It empties into the South Arm of Lake Charlevoix at the Village of East Jordan (Figure 1). The river has two major tributaries—the Green River and Deer Creek—with numerous minor tributaries to both the mainstream and Deer Creek.

The upper Jordan River consists of a wide valley and many islands, channels, and sloughs. (From the base of the steep hills on either side, the valley is often nearly a mile wide.) The upper river area is noted for its scenic beauty and for its undeveloped landscape. Its only intrusion being a single trail road paralleling the river. The lower Jordan is bordered by “northwoods-types” trees and lands.

The river is associated with a wealth of history dating back to the lumbering era when it was used principally as a log driving stream. Then, as now, it was an excellent trout stream with the reputation of having the best water quality of any stream in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. Large-scale logging operations started in the Jordan Valley in 1909 and ended in 1925. At one time, eight mills in Boyne City and East Jordan were operating and using timber from the river valley. Following the removal of the timber and abortive attempts at farming, most of the land in the upper valley reverted to state ownership because of non-payment of taxes. These tax-reverted lands are now a part of the Jordan River State Forest and are managed for multiple-use purposes, including timber, fish and wildlife, water conservation, and recreation. However, the lower six miles of the Jordan River, the upper two miles of the Green River, and the entire length of Deer Creek flow through private lands. The drainage area of the river system consists of approximately 100,000 acres.

The entire watershed is located in the 10-county northwest Michigan state planning and development region. Highway access to the region is good, or will be, with various north-south highways connecting the region with the urban centers of the southern Great Lakes area. Interstate freeway I-75 runs along the eastern border of the region. US-31, M-37, US-131, and M-66 traverse the region, or substantial parts of it, south to north and likewise connect with the region and connects this area with I-75 and US-127. US-31 and US-131 have been programmed for freeway construction in the next decade.

As seen in the chart below, the population of the two counties is still rather sparse, although it has grown significantly in the last decade. The only towns in or near the watershed, East Jordan and Mancelona, are relatively small and are not expected to increase significantly in size in the foreseeable future. Therefore use pressures on the river are not expected to be influenced from nearby towns.

## POPULATION

	Charlevoix County	Percent Change	Antrim County	Percent Change	Towns in two Counties	
						1970
1950	13,475		10,721		East Jordan	2,041
1960	13,421		10,373		Bellaire	705
1970	16,131		12,055		Mancelona	1,208
					Boyne City	2,887
					Charlevoix	3,391

## B. Recreational Opportunities in the Area

During winter, the Jordan River watershed area is used extensively as a snowmobilers' paradise. Many trails have been laid out by the East Jordan Snowmobilers' Club, and guided winter safaris are often held. At this time of year, a few hardy souls still enjoy snowshoe hare hunting with hound dogs in the cedar swamps along the Jordan.

When spring arrives, the first fishing occurs at a special season for steelheads on the lower area of the river below Webster's Bridge. Spring flowers bring out many to tramp the woods to see Mother Nature awaken from her winter's sleep. During May, a favorite recreational pastime is looking for the delicious morel mushroom. Seasoned fly fishermen happily await the night May fly hatch along the river bank while for others, camping and trail bike riding throughout the beautiful Jordan River watershed area promise much recreation.

The Jordan and its tributaries has always been a favorite trout stream for many. Nothing can compare with a day spent floating down the river in a riverboat and cooking the day's catch along the side of the riverbank.

Today, canoeing the Jordan is becoming a favorite pastime. A three-to-four hour trip from Graves Crossing to East Jordan is a scenic delight.

With fall arriving, color tours through the valley are popular. All of the bright colors of the spectrum are to be seen in the hardwoods. The vantage point for color is Dead Man's Hill located near the headwaters of the Jordan. With the opening of small game season, grouse and woodcock are hunted with dogs. Some like to float the Jordan and jump shoot the ducks that are found there. Deer are common throughout the watershed, but more abundant in the southern portion, and provide both bow and firearm hunters with quality sport. Many hardy souls have taken up the late fall sport of fishing from Websters Bridge down for steelhead and German brown trout.

These recreational opportunities for all ages in the Jordan River watershed offer their bounty for all four seasons.

## C. Existing and Proposed Local Zoning and Analysis of Zoning Situation

Two countywide interim zoning ordinances and one final ordinance have been turned down in Antrim County in recent years. The first proposed interim zoning ordinance was rejected at a referendum. A zoning commission in Charlevoix County is presently working on a countywide zoning ordinance, and adoption will require intensive educational work to overcome resistance to zoning by local people. However, South Arm Township, in which the extreme lower end and mouth of the Jordan River is situated, has a zoning ordinance. It establishes a minimum lot size of 60,000 square feet with a minimum of 150-foot frontage, a 50-foot setback from the river and a 35-foot minimum no-cutting strip.

Because practically all of the upper portion of the river lies within the Jordan River State Forest or is owned by the state, zoning may not be needed to protect that river area. Also, much of this land lies within a floodplain, which is inherently self-preserving.

From where the river turns northerly to its mouth, most of the land is in private ownership. However, much of the bordering land at the southern quarter of this 12-mile stretch is also in governmental ownership. Considerable lands along the entire stretch are lowlands of a cedar-tamarack swamp type, which tends, of course, to ward off land development. However, there are (1) cottages in various places, (2) riverside areas that are elevated sufficiently to make them attractive building sites, feeder streams attractive for damming, and (3) three bridge crossings which, of course, give good access to the river. Because of these factors, it would seem necessary to zone this entire stretch.

#### D. Other Laws & Programs Reinforcing Natural Rivers Management Objectives

A number of Michigan laws now authorize Department of Natural Resources programs or activities for the protection of rivers, directly or indirectly. Officials administering the river management program for the protection of the Jordan River should utilize these statutes to the extent possible in implementing the management plan objectives of the river and its tributaries. (See Appendix A)

The presently proposed Department of Natural Resources program to establish rules for river use on heavily-used streams may also be directed toward protecting natural rivers, particularly on those rivers where recreational use is or may be expected to be heavy. The rules have been designed to protect the river resources and the recreational experiences that are characteristic of a particular stream.

#### E. Other Factors

##### 1) Proposed Water Development Projects:

No applications for water development projects are presently being planned within the Jordan River Basin under the jurisdiction or review of the Department of Environmental Quality or Surface Water Quality, in relation to dam construction (Act 184, P.A. 1963), dredging or filling in or near the stream bed (Act 291, P.A. 1965), or extensive residential development within the floodplain under Act 167, P.A. 1968.

2) Existing or Proposed Watershed Councils and Their Future Intentions:

The Jordan River Watershed Commission was formally organized on January 15, 1967, under the authority of Part 311, PA. 451 of 1994. Prior to the formal organization of the Commission, substantial effort was expended in the Jordan River area through the parent organization, "Save the Jordan Steering Committee". The committee held their first meeting on June 27, 1967. At this meeting the committee formally decided to incorporate their activities under the provisions of Part 311, PA. 451 of 1994. Numerous individual efforts in promoting an awareness of needs of the Jordan River basin began as early as 1961.

The Watershed Commission is composed of sixteen members – one representative of each of the aforementioned governmental units and, a representative of the Alba Sportsman's Club, Jordan River Sportsman's Club, Mancelona Liar's Club, Charlevoix County Soil Conservation District and the Antrim County Soil Conservation District.